

Marketing Mix Strategies of Small and Medium Tourism enterprises in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The study sought to identify the marketing mix strategies of small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs), focusing on lodges and hotels of Masvingo Province in Zimbabwe. The continued low business performance by SMTEs in Masvingo Province motivated the study. The marketing mix theory underpinned the study. The ten tourism marketing mix strategies, namely product, price, place, promotion, people, process, physical evidence, programming, packaging, and partnership were the strategy variables of the study. The study employed a quantitative research approach. An online structured questionnaire was used to collect data from all the 250 owners and managers of SMTEs. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was used for the analysis of data. The main study findings were that SMTEs in Masvingo Province use all the ten tourism marketing mix strategies, albeit with varying degrees of application. The three most used strategies were product, packaging, and price. The three least used strategies were people, programming, and partnership. The moderately used strategies were physical evidence, promotion, place, and process. The value of this study relates to the use of a ten tourism marketing mix framework by SMTEs. Implications are that study organisations may not reach full performance potential due to unequal use of the ten tourism marketing mix strategy elements.

Keywords: Marketing mix, marketing mix strategy, small and medium tourism enterprises, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Introduction

Small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs) dominate the tourism industry landscape worldwide. They constitute more than 95% of the global tourism enterprises (Borden, Coles & Shaw, 2017; Mjongwana & Kamala, 2018; Seow, Choong & Ramayah, 2020), forming a critical mass in the tourism industry (Agha & Gafforova, 2019; Hlengwa & Thusi, 2018; Lindqvist, 2017; Mxunyelwa & Vallabh, 2017; Oji, Iwu & Haydam, 2017; Seow et al., 2020). SMTE is an establishment “financed by one individual or a small group and is directly managed by its owners, in a personalised manner and not through the medium of a formalised management structure, it is perceived small, in terms of physical facilities, production/service capacity, market share and number of employees” (Morrison, 1996:400). SMTEs fall under transportation, accommodation, catering, recreation, and cultural activity categories (Moriarty, Jones, Rowley, & Kupiec-Teahan, 2008; Morrison, 2018). They provide a distinctive local

ambiance and quality to tourists, creating, shaping, and driving the local tourism destination image (Ahmad, 2015; Buhalis, 1998; Lindqvist, 2017; Middleton & Clarke, 2001; Rambe, 2017). SMTEs play a significantly dominant role in the global economy through economic development, wealth creation, and employment generation, with at least 60% of the workforce in the tourism industry employed by SMTEs (Ahmad, 2015; Oji et al., 2017; Rambe, 2017). SMTEs make a strong contribution to the Gross Domestic Products (GDPs) of many nations, enhance competition, contribute to the provision of quality goods and services, and they are seedbeds of innovation and entrepreneurship (Agha & Gafforova, 2019; Shah, El-Gohary & Hussain, 2015; Seow et al., 2020). SMTEs influence the competitiveness of tourism destinations (Agha & Gafforova, 2019; Seow et al., 2020).

Despite their immense role, SMTEs receive little attention in terms of research into their marketing behaviour in developing countries (Jaafar, Abdul-Aziz, Maideen & Mohd, 2011; Mjongwana & Kamala, 2018; Morrison & Teixeira, 2004; Mxunyelwa & Vallabh, 2017; Oji et al., 2017; Shah et al., 2015; Thomas, Shaw & Page, 2011). SMTEs are regarded as smaller versions of large businesses and are overly ignored (Blackburn & Kovalainen, 2009; Dumbu, 2014; Reijonen & Komppula, 2007). Marketing within SMTEs seems to be deficient, relegated to the periphery, and of little significance to the business (Borden et al., 2017; Lindqvist, 2017; Frew & Davenport, 2000; Morrison, Rimmington & Williams, 1999), yet the success of SMTEs should be generated from within the firms themselves through effective marketing mix strategy implementation (Nyamwanza & Mavhiki, 2014). Shah et al., (2015), and Morrison and Teixeira (2004) stress the need for more research on the marketing behaviour of SMTEs, especially in developing countries, given the dearth of studies on SMTEs, despite their numerical dominance in the tourism industry. Also, most empirical studies have focused on either the 4Ps or the 7Ps paradigm (Naidoo, Ramseook-Munhurrin & Seetaram, 2010; Nonthapot & Thomya, 2020; Supawan & Deebhijarn, 2020). Thus, it is imperative to identify the marketing mix strategies of SMTEs, with the view to enhancing their performance (Minh Ngo, Pavelkova, Phu Thi Phan & Van Nguyen, 2018; Seow et al., 2020) using a ten tourism marketing mix framework. The authors' observations hold in Zimbabwe, as evidenced by the dearth of empirical studies on marketing mix strategies of SMTEs. This gap in tourism literature in Zimbabwe inspired this study. Thus, the marketing mix strategies used by SMTEs in Masvingo Province are largely not known. The main objective of the study was to identify the marketing mix strategies of SMTEs in Masvingo Province. This study is informed by marketing mix theory.

Literature review

Marketing mix

The marketing mix theory's origin is attributable to Borden (1953) and McCarthy (1960). It is the most fundamental concept of marketing theory (Font & McCabe, 2017; Wolfe & Crotts, 2011). The marketing mix represents a primary set of ingredients, an amalgam, a set of controllable tools, which a marketer or organisation mixes in different forms to influence demand, value, and customer satisfaction profitably (Azimi, Mahmoudi & Esmaeili, 2018; Citra Dewi & Suryawardani, 2019; Pomeroy, Noble & Johnson, 2011). It has the same analog as the cooking ingredients with which a cook can mix in different ways to prepare different dishes (Culliton, 1948) to specific guest requirements (Rasyid, Dani & Andriani, 2017; Moriarty et al., 2008). McCarthy (1960) gave marketing mix the shape by providing the original elements of product, price, place, and promotion, that is, the 4Ps. These 4Ps, though considered as "the holy quadruple...of the marketing faith...written in tablets of stone" (Kent, 1986:2), have been subjected to modifications by several scholars, to suit different contexts. Booms and Bitner (1981) added people, process, and physical evidence for services-specific.

Morrison (2009) added partnership, packaging, and programming for tourism-specific marketing. Therefore, the marketing mix elements examined in this study are ten, namely; product, price, place, promotion (McCarthy, 1960), process, people, physical evidence (Booms & Bitner, 1981), partnerships, programming, and packaging (Morrison, 2009). Pomeroy et al. (2011) also used the same ten tourism marketing mix framework to develop a sustainability tourism marketing model, hence its adoption in this study. The marketing mix has gained popularity since its inception due to its simplicity; it is easy to understand, memorise, and a handy tool that is adaptable to various marketing contexts (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1995). It allows marketing functions and activities to be distinguishable from other firm activities, it allows standardisation, it is refined, parsimonious, and comprehensive (Kamau, Waweru, Lewa & Misiko, 2015). It also makes task allocation and division of work to specialists easier and acts as a huge tool for creating a competitive position for firms (Goi, 2009; Gronroos, 1994; Kadhim, Abdullah & Abdullah, 2016; Teviana, Ginting, Lubis & Gultom, 2017). The marketing mix is the staple of marketing (Goi, 2009; Kent & Brown, 2006) and a source of differentiation for tourism enterprises (Gronroos, 1994; Moeller, 2010; Sadg, Othman & Khorsheed, 2019).

Marketing mix strategies of SMTEs

A marketing mix strategy is the means, way, or the game plan by which a tourism enterprise reaches or serves its target market (Adewale, Adesola & Oyewale, 2013; Suherly, Affif & Guterres, 2016), in pursuance of business objectives, using marketing mix elements (Akroush, 2020; Lahtinen, Dietrich & Rundle-thiele, 2020; Prihatin & Syahnur, 2020). The marketing mix strategy's core function is "to determine the nature, strength, direction, and interaction between the marketing mix elements and the environmental factors in a particular situation" (Adewale et al., 2013:60), thus helping to establish, build, defend, and maintain a business' competitive advantage (Dadzie, Amponsah, Dadzie & Winston, 2017; Shukla, 2017). Thus, to remain competitive, an effective marketing mix strategy is a prerequisite tool (Adewale et al., 2013), for SMTEs (Borden et al., 2017; Lindqvist, 2017) to achieve superior business performance. In this study, marketing mix strategy tools are product, price, place, promotion, people, process, physical evidence, programming, packaging, and partnership.

Product

Product is anything that can be offered to a market to satisfy a want or need (Kotler, Bowen & Makens, 2014), and this includes goods, services, events, organisations, people, and ideas (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). A product provides an appropriate bundle of need-satisfying benefits to consumers (Bhargav, 2017; Kotler et al., 2014). A tourism product can be physical or non-physical, can be tangible or intangible (Kuwu & Gakure, 2014; Thwala & Slabbert, 2018), and can be a whole destination or an industry element such as an attraction, or a hotel (Salman, Tawfik, Samy & Artal-Tur, 2017). Product is the core variable of tourism marketing mix strategy (Kotler et al, 2014; Kuwu & Gakure, 2014; Naidoo et al, 2011) and it determines the success or failure of a tourism enterprise (Citra Dewi & Suryawardani, 2019; Kuwu & Gakure, 2014; Pappas, 2015). Thus, SMTEs offer accommodation, conference facilities, and restaurants, swimming pools, and sports facilities as their product (Thwala & Slabbert, 2018).

Price

Price is the money exchanged between the tourist and the service provider for need-satisfying products and services (Al-debi & Mustafa, 2014; Ampountolas, Shaw & James, 2020; Moro, Rita, & Oliveira, 2018). Price represents the value of a product (Ampountolas et al., 2020; Citra Dewi & Suryawardani, 2019) and brings money for the organisation (Abrate, Nicolau &

Viglia, 2019; Kotler et al, 2014; Pomeroy et al., 2011). Customers focus more on price when making purchase decisions (Vives & Jacob, 2019), as they consider it to be a key quality indicator (Anderson & Xie, 2016; Xu, Xiao & Gursoy, 2017). Key price determinants include costs, market demand, and competition (Jiang & Taylor, 2020; Latinopoulos, 2018; Thwala & Slabbert, 2018). Key pricing approaches include cost-based, competition-based, demand-based, and price discrimination (Moro et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2017). Price is a key determinant of demand and profitability for SMTEs (Pawlicz & Napierala, 2017; Vives, Jacob & Payeras, 2018).

Place

Place, or distribution channel, serves to make products or services accessible and available to consumers in the most convenient way (Al-debi & Mustafa, 2014; Kotler et al, 2014; Pearce & Tan, 2006; Thwala & Slabbert, 2018). SMTEs use direct and indirect, traditional and modern, online and offline channels (Kotler et al, 2014; Morrison, 2009). Direct distribution entails SMTEs taking full responsibility for the delivery, promotion, and selling of products and services to their target markets (Dolasinski, 2019; Smithson, Devece & Lapiedra, 2011; Morrison, 2009). Indirect distribution entails the responsibility for promoting the product, and delivering the product is given to travel intermediaries, both online and offline (Dolasinski, 2019; Tibaingana, 2019). Therefore, SMTEs should aim to deliver the right product or service at the right time and the right place, using the right channel to enhance performance (Azimi et al., 2018).

Promotion

Promotion is concerned with “how firms attempt to inform, persuade, and remind consumers, directly or indirectly about the products, services, and brands that they sell” (Kotler & Keller, 2006:536). Promotion is the brand’s voice that allows SMTEs to build profitable relationships with tourists (Dadzie et al., 2017; Hossain, Chowdhury, Hasan, Ather & Yusuf, 2020). It influences the purchasing patterns of tourists (Nonthapot & Thomya, 2020; Prihatin & Syahnur, 2020). Promotion is accomplished via a promotion mix that includes advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, exhibitions, sponsorships, merchandising, social networks, marketing collateral, and direct mail options (Suherly et al., 2016), to achieve better business performance among SMTEs (Kotler et al, 2014; Nonthapot & Thomya, 2020). The use of digital marketing tools such as websites and Facebook can help to promote tourism enterprises (Chamboko-Mpotaringa & Tichaawa, 2021).

People

People include “all human actors who play a part in service delivery and thus influence the buyer’s perceptions” (Ziethamel, Bitner & Gremler, 2006:26). The people include the firm’s personnel, the customer, and other customers in the service environment (Al-debi & Mustafa, 2014; Hamid, Sadiq & Muzaffar, 2015; Ngo et al., 2018; Ziethamel et al., 2006). The employees are the hosts or service providers and customers (guests) are co-producers in the tourism industry, and their interactions need proper management within SMTEs (Dadzie et al., 2017; Morrison, 2009). Thus, people can make or break the business success of SMTEs through their behaviour, attitude, and appearance (Ismail & Hilal, 2019; Mucai, Mbaeh & Noor, 2013; Mxunyelwa & Vallabh, 2017).

Process

Process involves actual procedures and mechanisms by which the service is assembled and delivered to the customer (Al-debi & Mustafa, 2014; Bhargav, 2017; Mohammad, 2015;

Prihatin & Syahnur, 2020; Ziethamel et al., 2006). Process influences the consumer demand and business performance of SMTEs (Prihatin & Syahnur, 2020), hence the need for effective process management. Technological advances have transformed processes within the tourism industry (Buhalis, 2001; Čirjevskis, 2020; Cohen, Prayag & Moital, 2014). Thus, the ability to incorporate technology-driven processes within SMTEs is important for business success within SMTEs (Brown, 2015). Therefore, SMTEs should put in place the right standard operating procedures (SOP) to achieve superior business performance.

Physical evidence

Physical evidence describes “the environment in which the service is delivered and where the firm and customer interact, and any tangible components that facilitate performance or communication of the service” (Ziethaml et al, 2006:27). Physical evidence is everything the customer sees, hears, and feels about an organisation (Makuzva & Ntloko, 2018; Pomerling et al., 2011) and it includes such things as furniture, fixtures and fittings, equipment, buildings, décor, uniform, appearances, brochures, letterheads, business cards, vehicles, signage, the landscape, and the gardens (Avraham & Ketter, 2017; Bhargav, 2017). Physical evidence influences tourist buying behaviour and enhances the business performance of SMTEs (Kotler et al, 2014; Hossain et al., 2020; Prihatin & Syahnur, 2020).

Programming

Programming “involves developing special activities, events, or programs to increase customer spending or give added appeal to a package or other hospitality/travel service” (Morrison, 2009:392). According to Morrison (2009: 391) “programs are the epitome of the marketing concept” as they are customised to specific customer requirements. Programs are demand generators for SMTEs (Morrison, 2009; Nonthapot & Thomya, 2020). Programming serves to drive the business performance of SMTEs as it brings increased demand and enriches tourist experiences (Morrison, 2009; Pomerling et al., 2011).

Packaging

Packaging involves a combination of related and complementary products such as transportation, accommodation, meals, activities, and tours into a single-price offering, for the convenience of customers (Pomerling et al., 2011; Morrison, 2009:392). Packaging differentiates the product, helps to manage demand and capacity usage (Citra Dewi & Suryawardani, 2019; Pomerling et al., 2011). It is the “epitome of the marketing concept” (Morrison, 2009: 391), as packages are customised to customer requirements (Loo & Leung, 2018). Packaging is a key determinant of business performance for SMTEs (Morrison, 2009), as it brings increased affordability, diversity of experience, and ultimate convenience to tourists (Loo & Leung, 2018; Prihatin & Syahnur, 2020; Thieu et al., 2017).

Partnership

Partnership is cooperative marketing efforts by SMTEs that are mutually beneficial to all stakeholders involved (Chhabra, 2009; Morrison, 2009; Pomerling et al., 2011). SMTEs cooperate to reach current and new customers through mutually beneficial programmes (Kossyva, Sarri & Georgopoulos, 2014; Pomerling et al., 2011; Tshehla, 2018). Partnership comes in different forms, such as partnerships with customers, partnerships with companies in the same business, partnerships with companies in related business, and partnerships with companies in non-related business (Kossyva et al., 2014; Lucas, 2017; Morrison, 2009; Pomerling et al., 2011). Partnership brings increased business performance for SMTEs.

Understanding small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs)

A small and medium tourism enterprise (SMTE) is defined as an establishment in the tourism industry that is "financed by one individual or a small group run in a personalized manner, it is small in terms of physical facilities, service capacity, and the number of employees" (Morrison, 1996:400). SMTEs employ fewer than 250 people, have less than 120 rooms, operate in the lower reaches of the market, and are often situated in urban, peri-urban, and rural locations (Buhalis & Main, 1998; Cooper, De Lacy & Jago, 2005). They are categorised under transportation, accommodation, catering, recreation, museums, local curio stores, restaurants, theatres, cultural activities, art galleries and studios, tour operators, and travel agencies (Minh Ngo et al, 2018; Morrison, 1996). The study focuses on the accommodation category (lodges and hotels). The size of a lodge or hotel is defined by the number of rooms, the number of beds, and the number of employees, among other parameters (Jaafar et al., 2011; Barjaktarovic & Barjaktarovic, 2010). Hotels and lodges are divided as follows: small hotels (from 30 rooms / up to 60 beds), medium hotels (from 30 up to 120 rooms/ up to 250 beds), and large hotels (above 120 rooms / above 250 beds) (Barjaktarovic & Barjaktarovic, 2010). In this study, SMTEs are registered small and medium scale lodges and hotels with a minimum of five rooms and a maximum of one hundred and twenty rooms located in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. SMTEs dominate the tourism industry, with more than 95% of the enterprises being SMTEs across the globe (Agha & Gafforova, 2019; Mxunyelwa & Vallabh, 2017). SMTEs are creators, shapers, and drivers of the destinations image (Agha & Gafforova, 2020; Mxunyelwa & Vallabh, 2017; Thomas et al., 2011; Buhalis, 1998). They provide product diversity, connecting tourists with the local cultural flavour and character of the destination (Agha & Gafforova, 2019; Lindqvist, 2017). SMTEs provide employment, create new jobs, stimulate competition, and stimulate the local economy by facilitating the rapid infusion of tourist spending (Borden et al., 2017; Morrison, 2018). Additionally, SMTEs improve the standard of living and community wellbeing, help in developing an entrepreneurial culture in society, and in engendering innovation (Agha & Gafforova, 2020; Wanhill, 2000). SMTEs are the seedbed of innovation, research, and development (Giang, 2019; Seow et al., 2020).

Understanding marketing and small and medium tourism enterprises

The success of SMTEs is a function of effective marketing (Lindqvist, 2017; Rasyid, Dani & Andriani, 2017). Marketing within SMTEs is deemed different from that of big businesses (Lindqvist, 2017; Moriarty et al., 2008; Oji et al., 2017; Shukla, 2017). Conventional marketing is non-existent within SMTEs, as they exhibit entrepreneurial marketing (Moriarty et al., 2008). SMTEs apply a distinctive marketing style that is divorced from conventional marketing textbooks and theories (Dragnic, 2009). Their marketing activities are unplanned, unstructured, loose, spontaneous, reactive, and largely deficient (Mhizha, 2014; Moriarty et al., 2008). Marketing in SMTEs is ad hoc, that is, lacking continuity and consistency, it is not well integrated within the organisational structure, and is not well coordinated (Dragnic, 2009; Mhizha, 2014). This is largely influenced by the dominant owner-manager, who prefers a simple, intuitive, and pragmatic action-oriented approach to marketing rather than formality and complexity (Minh Ngo et al, 2018; Wanhill, 2000). Moreover, SMTE marketing strategy is influenced by financial and human resource poverty that includes short-termism, lack of marketing expertise, attitudinal problem towards conventional marketing, and time constraints. SMTE managers are generalists with scanty knowledge of marketing and often confuse marketing with advertising and selling (Minh Ngo et al., 2018; Wanhill, 2000). SMTEs use more word-of-mouth communication and networking as key promotion tools (Stokes & Lomax, 2002), have close relationships with their market, and significantly rely on experiential knowledge to advance the marketing of products and services (Moriarty et al., 2008; Resnick

& Cheng, 2011; Zontanos & Anderson, 2004). SMTEs value the building and maintenance of relationships with their clients. Resnick and Cheng (2011) concluded that SME marketing is focused on meeting customer needs and wants through networking and building long-term customer relationships. Therefore, this study sought to contribute to the understanding of marketing mix strategies of SMTEs in Masvingo Province.

Methodology

The study employed a quantitative research approach to identify the marketing mix strategies of SMTEs in Masvingo Province. The province, located in the South-Eastern part of Zimbabwe, consists of seven districts, namely Masvingo, Gutu, Zaka, Mwenezi, Chiredzi, Chivi, and Bikita. It is known for tourism development, with the Great Zimbabwe National Monument, Lake Mutirikwi, Lake Tugwi Mukosi, Gonarezhou National Park, Sugar Cane Estates, and Kyle Recreational Park, as main tourist attractions. Masvingo Province was chosen for this study because, firstly, SMTEs in the province are experiencing a decline in business, with occupancy averaging below 40% for the past fifteen years (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA), 2003, 2018). Secondly, on a national performance ranking scale, the province is number seven and always in the bottom three, out of ten tourist destinations (ZTA, 2016; 2017; 2018). Thirdly, a literature review conducted revealed very limited studies on marketing mix strategies used by SMTEs.

A single cross-sectional survey strategy was employed to select all the 250 owners and managers of SMTEs from 85 registered facilities. The Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) facilities database for Masvingo Province for 2018 was the sampling frame. Data were collected using an online structured questionnaire created using Google forms and distributed via Email and WhatsApp (Woyo & Slabbert, 2019) from June to August 2019. The questionnaire had sections A and B. Section A had close-ended multiple choice questions on demographic factors. Section B comprised close-ended five-point Likert scale questions (1= strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) on ten tourism marketing mix strategies of SMTEs, namely product, price, place, promotion, people, process, physical evidence, programming, packaging, and partnership. The measurement items were based on empirical literature (Akroush, 2011; Ishar & Mubarak, 2017; Pomeroy et al., 2011). Of the 250 questionnaires distributed to respondents, 216 completed questionnaires were received via an online link. Nevertheless, upon data cleaning, 206 observations remained and these accounted for an 82.4% response rate. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 to identify the marketing mix strategies of SMTEs in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.822 showing the reliability of the study.

Results

Summary of demographic characteristics

There were more males (55.34%) than females (44.66%) in the study and this concurs with the ZIMSTAT (2016) report in which hospitality managers were largely males. The increasing role of women in management should be acknowledged as shown by the 10% difference between males and females. The majority of study respondents (93.20%) were 31 years and above, meaning respondents were mature people. All the respondents were graduates who had at least a certificate and this enhanced the validity of study findings, as argued by Bryman and Bell (2015) who emphasised the need to sample knowledgeable respondents who would be in a position to comprehend the instruments. Study respondents were distributed across key departments, with departmental managers dominating with 55.35%. The other positions were owners (17.06%), managing directors (7.28%), and general managers (19.42%). The representations of the various business functions at the senior level were rather inclusive and

this served to eliminate respondent bias (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The majority of respondents had at least 6 years of experience (85.9%) in the tourism industry, implying that the respondents were well informed about their organisations and the tourism industry at large. The majority of respondents were from lodges (78.2%) and 21.8% came from hotels, with Masvingo and Chiredzi districts contributing 43.69% and 30.10%, respectively. The other five districts contributed relatively fewer respondents. Moreover, 84.47% of the respondents came from lodges and hotels with 5 to 30 rooms. The description of the sample is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Sample profile of respondents

Variable	SMTE Owners & Managers N = 206	
	N	%
Gender		
Male	114	55.34%
Female	92	44.66%
Age		
30 years and below	14	6.80%
31 – 39 years	87	42.23%
40 – 49 years	72	34.95%
50 years and above	33	16.02%
Type of organisation		
Lodge	161	78.16%
Hotel	45	21.84%
Number of rooms		
5 – 30 rooms	174	84.47%
31 – 60 rooms	23	11.17%
61 – 90 rooms	2	0.97%
91 – 120 rooms	7	3.40%
Level of education		
Ph.D.	1	0.49%
Master’s degree	11	5.34%
Bachelor’s degree	69	33.50%
Diploma	84	40.78%
Certificate	41	19.90%
Position in the organisation		
Owner	37	17.96%
Managing Director	15	7.28%
General Manager	40	19.42%
Marketing Manager	16	7.77%
Front Office Manager	48	23.30%
Food and Beverage Manager	11	5.34%
Executive Housekeeper	18	8.74%
Head Chef	11	5.34%
Finance Manager	4	1.94%
Human Resources Manager	5	2.43%
Accountant	1	0.49%
Experience in the industry		
0 – 5 years	29	14.08%
6-10 years	54	26.21%
11 – 15 years	53	25.73%
16 years and above	70	33.96%
District in the province		
Bikita	8	3.88%
Chivi	19	9.22%
Chiredzi	62	30.10%
Gutu	10	4.85%
Masvingo	90	43.69%

Mwenezi	11	5.34%
Zaka	6	2.91%

Marketing mix strategies used by SMTEs

The study sought to establish the marketing mix strategies used by SMTEs in Masvingo Province. The presentation of the strategies follows the marketing mix strategy elements of product, price, place, promotion, people, process, physical evidence, programming, packaging, and partnership.

Tourism product strategies (TP)

The three most used product strategies by SMTEs were: they offer unique, distinctive, and memorable experiences to guests ($M = 4.95$, $SD = .757$), they provide quality products ($M=4.49$, $SD=.734$) that meet the needs and wants of customers, and their product design is customised to customer requirements ($M=4.17$, $SD= .702$). The three least product strategies used by SMTEs are: our lodge / hotel provides right products / services all the time ($M = 3.49$, $SD =0.568$), our lodge / hotel products or service design promotes environmental sustainability ($M=3.61$; $SD = 0.528$), and our lodge / hotel has a well-developed strategy for developing and introducing new products / services ($M=3.82$; $SD=0.548$). The means and standard deviations for product strategies measurement items are presented in table 2 below.

Table 2: Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for product strategies

TP	Tourism Product (TP) Strategies Statements	n	M	SD
TP 1	Our lodge / hotel offers consistent quality products / services that meet customer needs and wants.	206	4.18	.734
TP 2	Our lodge / hotel product / service design is customised to meet customer needs and wants.	206	4.17	.702
TP 3	Our lodge / hotel provides a unique, distinctive and memorable product or service experience.	206	4.05	.757
TP 4	Our lodge / hotel has a strong product or service reputation and an appealing brand image.	206	3.95	.860
TP 5	Our lodge / hotel builds brand reputation by providing a distinctive service quality.	206	3.89	.917
TP 6	Our lodge / hotel provides right products / services all the time.	206	3.49	1.168
TP 7	Our lodge or hotel quickly modifies products and services to meet changing customer requirements.	206	3.33	1.284
TP 8	Our lodge / hotel has a well-developed strategy for developing and introducing new products / services.	206	3.52	1.138
TP 9	Our lodge / hotel products / services design promotes environmental sustainability.	206	3.01	1.128
TP 10	Our lodge / hotel uses excellent customer service as a differentiation element of its service offering strategy.	206	4.16	.894
	Averages	206	4.05	.668

The overall mean rating ($M=4.05$) and standard deviation ($SD=0.668$) for all the measurement items indicate that SMTEs are using several product strategies to drive their performance.

Tourism price strategies (TPR)

Price strategies with the highest means include: we have different price levels for the different classes of rooms we provide to the market ($M = 4.65$, $SD = .528$) and, we have different price levels according to the market segments we serve ($M = 4.64$, $SD = .557$). The price strategies with the lowest means include: and our lodge / hotel pricing is solely based on costs ($M = 3.11$; $SD = 0.659$) and, our lodge / hotel pricing considers environmental protection and sustainability issues ($M=3.12$; $SD = 0.786$). The overall mean ($M=4.03$ and a standard deviation of ($M=0.659$) show that SMTEs use price strategies to market their products and services as shown in Table 3 below.



Table 3: Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for price strategies

TPR	Tourism Price (TPR)	n	M	SD
TPR 1	We have different price levels according to the market segments we serve.	206	4.64	.557
TPR 2	We have different price levels for the different classes of rooms we provide to the market.	206	4.65	.528
TPR 3	Our lodge/ hotel pricing is based on what customers are willing to pay.	206	4.26	.752
TPR 4	Our lodge/ hotel pricing is based on target profit	206	4.10	.780
TPR 5	Our lodge / hotel pricing is based on level of demand.	206	4.08	.742
TPR 6	Our lodge / hotel pricing is solely based on costs.	206	3.91	.959
TPR 7	Our lodge / hotel pricing is based on competition.	206	4.14	.671
TPR 8	Our lodge / hotel uses promotion pricing such as price discounts.	206	4.21	.714
TPR 9	Our lodge / hotel uses value based pricing approach.	206	4.02	.684
TPR 10	Our lodge / hotel pricing considers environmental protection and sustainability issues.	206	3.60	.986
TPR	TPR Averages	206	4.03	.659

Tourism place strategies (TPL)

Most respondents agreed that they use a direct sales force to sell products and services (M = 4.51, SD = .920) and their lodge/hotel is conveniently located such that our customers easily find their way here (M = 4.40, SD = 1.007). The items with the lowest mean rating are: our lodge/hotel uses an online 24-hour central reservations system to deliver products and services (M = 1.65, SD = .787) and, our lodge/hotel uses global distribution systems to distribute its products and services (M = 1.69, SD = .926). The overall mean (M=3.40) and standard deviation (SD=1.167) show moderate use by SMTEs as presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for place strategies

TPL	Tourism Place (TPL)	n	M	SD
TPL 1	Our lodge / hotel uses direct sales force to sell products and services.	206	4.51	.920
TPL 2	Our lodge / hotel uses travel agencies to sell products and services.	206	3.30	1.385
TPL 3	Our lodge / hotel uses tour operators to sell products and services.	206	3.25	1.432
TPL 4	Our lodge / hotel uses electronic distribution channels such as internet to deliver products and services.	206	3.77	.978
TPL 5	Our lodge / hotel uses multi-channel distribution to deliver services based on the market segment we serve.	206	3.67	1.160
TPL 6	Our lodge / hotel uses an online 24-hour central reservations system to deliver products and services.	206	1.25	.687
TPL 7	Our Lodge / hotel uses global distribution systems to distribute its products and services.	206	1.19	.626
TPL 8	Our lodge / hotel is conveniently located such that our customers easily find their way here.	206	4.10	1.007
TPL 9	Our lodge / hotel uses distribution channels that are environmentally friendly for sustainability.	206	3.26	.987
TPL 10	Our lodge / hotel uses market segmentation to assign the most appropriate distribution channel to each segment.	206	3.28	.987
TPL	TPL Averages	206	3.40	1.167

Tourism promotion strategies (TPRO)

The most used strategies by SMTEs, as shown by higher means, include: our lodge/hotel uses advertising media such as brochures, fliers, and business cards (M = 4.98; SD = .817), our lodge/hotel uses personal selling, electronic mail, short message service (SMS) and, telemarketing for promotion (M = 3.97, SD = 0.519). The least used strategies by SMTEs include: our lodge / hotel uses advertising media such as television and radio (M = 1.89, SD = .764), and, our lodge / hotel uses public relations, publicity and sponsorships for promotion (M

= 1.94, SD = .871). The overall mean (M=3.61) and standard deviation (SD= 0.918) show moderate usage of promotion strategies by SMTEs as presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for promotion strategies

TPRO	Tourism Promotion (TPRO)	n	M	SD
TPRO 1	Our lodge / hotel uses advertising media such as television and radio.	206	1.31	.764
TPRO 2	Our lodge / hotel uses advertising media such as billboards, newspapers and magazines,	206	2.00	1.327
TPRO 3	Our lodge / hotel uses advertising media such as brochures, fliers and business cards.	206	4.73	.817
TPRO 4	Our lodge / hotel uses personal selling, electronic mail, short message service (SMS) and telemarketing for promotion.	206	3.87	1.009
TPRO 5	Our lodge / hotel uses public relations, publicity and sponsorships for promotion.	206	1.54	.971
TPRO 6	Our lodge / hotel attends tourism and hospitality expos, shows and exhibitions showcasing our products and services.	206	2.84	1.601
TPRO 7	Our lodge / hotel uses internet or online platforms such as a website for promoting products and services.	206	3.55	1.255
TPRO 8	Our lodge / hotel uses online social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Instagram for promoting products and services.	206	3.81	1.144
TPRO 9	Our lodge / hotel uses sales promotions tool such as gifts, price discounts, competitions and complimentary services for promoting products and services.	206	3.67	1.220
TPRO 10	Our lodge / hotel promotes environmentally friendly practises among employees, customers and society at large using its communications mix.	206	3.40	1.035
TPRO	TPRO Averages	206	3.61	0.918

Tourism people strategies (TPEO)

Results on Table 6 indicate that the most used people strategies by SMTEs are: customer needs and wants are the focus of everything the lodge/hotel does (M = 4.10. SD = 0.715) and, our lodge/hotel staff are appropriately qualified, competent, empowered and possess complete product knowledge to serve our customers well (M = 4.03. SD = .780). Those least used strategies by SMTEs are: our lodge/hotel has ongoing training programmes for our staff on both technical and customer care skills (M=2.13; SD=1.107) and, our lodge/hotel measures guests' satisfaction systematically and frequently (M = 2.22; SD = 1.164). The overall mean (M=2.87) and standard deviation (SD=0.972) suggest sub-average usage of people strategies by SMTEs as presented in table 6 above.

Table 6: Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for people strategies

TPEO	Tourism People (TPEO) Strategies Statements	n	M	SD
TPEO 1	Our lodge / hotel staff is appropriately qualified, competent, empowered and possess complete product knowledge to serve our customers well.	206	4.03	.780
TPEO 2	Customer needs and wants are the focus of everything the lodge / hotel does.	206	4.10	.715
TPEO 3	Our lodge / hotel employees are consistently courteous, prompt, reliable and initiative towards serving guests.	206	3.78	.905
TPEO 4	Our lodge / hotel regularly collect information about guests' needs, wants and requirements.	206	2.82	1.351
TPEO 5	Our lodge / hotel measures guests' satisfaction systematically and frequently.	206	2.52	1.364
TPEO 6	Our lodge / hotel is always looking at ways to create valuable relationships with customers.	206	3.25	1.230
TPEO 7	Our lodge / hotel top management involves staff when planning and making decisions.	206	3.01	1.224
TPEO 8	Our lodge / hotel has ongoing training programs for our staff on both technical and customer care skills.	206	2.73	1.207
TPEO 9	Our lodge / hotel follows best practises in the hiring, selection, induction, motivating, rewarding and retaining of employees for the good of the lodge / hotel.	206	2.75	1.190
TPEO 10	Our lodge / hotel considers the broader needs of the society or host community and the environment in its business activities.	206	2.97	1.059
TPEO	TPEO Averages	206	2.87	0.972



Tourism process strategies (TPRC)

The process strategies mostly used by SMTEs are: we do have standard operating procedures (SOP) regarding all the activities of the lodge/hotel to serve customers well ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.856$), and, our lodge/hotel business processes are designed to enhance the quality of customer interactions and experiences ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.691$). The two least used strategies by SMTEs are: our lodge/hotel has a central reservation system that handles all lodge/hotel reservations ($M = 1.29$, $SD = .977$) and, our lodge/hotel has the flexibility to meet the changing needs and wants of customers ($M = 1.34$, $SD = 1.331$). The overall mean ($M=2.95$) and standard deviation (1.009) suggest sub-average usage as presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for process strategies

TPRC	Tourism Process (TPRC) Strategies Statements	n	M	SD
TPRC 1	We do have standard operating procedures (SOP) regarding all the activities of the lodge / hotel to serve customers well.	206	4.34	.856
TPRC 2	Our lodge / hotel business processes are designed to enhance the quality of customer interactions and experiences.	206	4.01	.691
TPRC 3	We adopted the use of information communication technology in processing our work such as computerising work processes.	206	3.88	.911
TPRC 4	Our lodge / hotel design of the service delivery process is based on meeting needs and wants of customers.	206	3.95	.646
TPRC 5	Our lodge / hotel maintains an interactive two way communication with its customers.	206	3.76	.887
TPRC 6	Our lodge / hotel has a central reservation system which handles all lodge / hotel reservations.	206	1.41	.877
TPRC 7	Our lodge / hotel has online payment processing systems for the convenience of our customers.	206	2.79	1.314
TPRC 8	Our lodge / hotel has the flexibility to meet the changing needs and wants of customers.	206	2.54	1.331
TPRC 9	Our lodge / hotel considers environmental protection and sustainability issues in its business processes.	206	3.15	1.087
TPRC 10	Our lodge / hotel activities of various departments are coordinated to ensure customer satisfaction.	206	3.31	1.027
TPRC	TPRC Averages	206	2.95	1.009

Tourism physical evidence strategies (TPHE)

The physical evidence strategies mostly used by SMTEs, as shown by higher means, include: our lodge/hotel does have a comfortable physical environment, furnishings, décor, colours for creating a good atmosphere ($M = 4.55$, $SD = .837$), and, our lodge/hotel facilities design and layout is visually appealing and projects the best image of the company ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.852$). The strategies least used by SMTEs include: our lodge/hotel considers the natural environment in the design and layout of guest amenities and facilities ($M=2.90$, $SD=0.615$), and, our lodge/hotel service and image online match our service and image offline ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 1.015$). The overall mean ($M=3.62$) and standard deviation ($SD=0.855$) suggest a moderate usage of physical evidence strategies as presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for physical evidence strategies

TPHE	Tourism physical evidence (TPHE)	n	M	SD
TPHE 1	Our lodge / hotel do have a comfortable physical environment, furnishings, décor, colours for creating a good atmosphere.	206	4.13	.837
TPHE 2	Our lodge / hotel facilities design and layout is visually appealing and projects the best image of the company.	206	3.90	.852
TPHE 3	Customer satisfaction is our prime objective in designing our working environment.	206	3.94	.763
TPHE 4	Our lodge / hotel employees are always dressed in company uniform to project the right image for our company.	206	3.56	1.097

TPHE 5	The appearance of lodge / hotel buildings, vehicles, and equipment and garden facilities is best to ensure the best image of our company.	206	3.53	1.125
TPHE 6	The design, layout, colour and appearance of lodge / hotel rooms and other facilities ensures customer satisfaction.	206	3.50	1.044
TPHE 7	Our lodge / hotel service and image online matches our service and image offline.	206	2.42	1.315
TPHE 8	Our lodge / hotel considers the natural environment in the design and layout of guest amenities and facilities.	206	2.90	1.115
TPHE 9	Our lodge / hotel has modern and comfortable facilities and amenities for the satisfaction of guests.	206	2.76	1.213
TPHE 10	The guestrooms, bathrooms and sanitary facilities of our lodge / hotel are always clean for the health and safety of guests.	206	3.91	1.131
TPHE	TPHE Averages	206	3.62	0.855

Tourism Programming Strategies (TPRM)

The strategies mostly used by SMTEs include: our lodge/hotel creates and supports programmes, events, and activities that promote environmental protection and sustainability (M = 2.19, SD = 1.087) and, our lodge/hotel engages in activities related to special holidays to keep the customers interested in our products or services (M=2.16, SD=1.349). The strategies least used are: our lodge/hotel organises special events and activities in line with different industry seasons to enhance the guest experience (M = 1.55, SD = 0.891), and, our lodge/hotel takes advantage of nationally organised sporting events to market its product and services (M = 1.78, SD = 1.015). The overall mean (M=1.95) and standard deviation (SD=0.966) suggest low usage of programming by SMTEs as presented in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for programming strategies

TPRM	Tourism Programming (TPRM) Strategies Statements	n	M	SD
TPRM 1	Our lodge / hotel organises special events themed in such a way to enhance guest experience.	206	2.10	1.473
TPRM 2	Our lodge / hotel engages in activities related to special holidays to keep the customers interested in our products or services.	206	2.16	1.349
TPRM 3	Our lodge / hotel participates in activities associated with seasons (winter, summer, and autumn, spring) to increase customer spending.	206	1.75	1.060
TPRM 4	Our lodge / hotel has customer loyalty programs to build long term relationships with its customers.	206	2.04	1.299
TPRM 5	Our lodge / hotel takes advantage of nationally organised events to build its overall brand image.	206	1.78	1.005
TPRM 6	Our lodge / hotel organises special events and activities in line with different industry seasons (low, medium and high) to enhance guest experience.	206	1.55	.891
TPRM 7	Our lodge / hotel takes advantage of nationally organised sporting events to market its product and services.	206	1.67	.961
TPRM 8	Our lodge / hotel creates and supports programs, events and activities that promote environmental protection and sustainability.	206	2.19	1.287
TPRM 9	Our lodge / hotel has special activities and events for different market segments (children, families, corporates, and schools) to enhance guest experience.	206	1.85	1.108
TPRM 10	Our lodge / hotel uses special events and activities as a differentiation strategy for the delightment of guests.	206	2.05	1.108
TPRM	TPRM Averages	206	1.95	0.966

Tourism packaging strategies (TPACK)

The strategies mostly used by SMTEs include: our lodge/hotel bundles its products and services such as accommodation, food, entertainment, activities for customer convenience (4.88, SD = .854) and, our lodge/hotel sells its products and services in singular form only for guest convenience (M=4.66, SD=0.624). The strategies least used by SMTEs are: our lodge/hotel packages its product and service offering by working with other competitor companies to best serve the market (M = 2.87, SD = 0.718) and, our lodge/hotel agrees to be part of packages

organised by travel intermediaries such as event planners ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.046$). The overall mean ($M=4.04$) and standard deviation ($SD=0.822$) suggest high usage of packaging as presented in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for packaging strategies

TPACK	Tourism Packaging (TPACK) Strategies Statements	n	M	SD
TPACK 1	Our lodge / hotel bundles its products and services such as accommodation, food, entertainment, activities for customer convenience.	206	4.48	.854
TPACK 2	Our lodge / hotel packages its product and service offering by working with other competitor companies to best serve the market.	206	2.07	1.318
TPACK 3	Our lodge / hotel agrees to be part of packaged tours organised by tour operators	206	3.33	1.354
TPACK 4	Our lodge / hotel sells its products and services in singular form only for guest convenience.	206	4.00	1.024
TPACK 5	Our lodge / hotel sells its products and services in packages as a single price offering.	206	4.04	1.051
TPACK 6	Our lodge / hotel sells its products and services both in packages and in singular form for customer convenience	206	4.13	1.052
TPACK 7	Our lodge / hotel has different packages for the different markets we serve.	206	3.99	.929
TPACK 8	Our lodge / hotel agrees to be part of packages organised by travel intermediaries such as event planners.	206	3.20	1.430
TPACK 9	Our lodge / hotel products and services are packaged with the protection of the environment in mind.	206	3.13	1.097
TPACK 10	Our lodge / hotel uses packaging as a differentiation strategy to enhance its brand image.	206	3.01	1.057
TPACK	TPACK Averages	206	4.04	0.822

Tourism partnership strategies (TPART)

The partnership strategies mostly used by SMTEs, as shown by higher means, include: our lodge/hotel partners with its customers in the development, delivery, and marketing of its products and services ($M=3.10$, $SD=0.625$) and, our lodge/hotel partners with tourism representative organisations such as ZTA in marketing its products and services ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 1.026$). The strategies least used by SMTEs include: our lodge/hotel partners with airlines, coaches, and other carriers in marketing its products and services ($M=1.11$, $SD=0.821$) and, our lodge/hotel partners with competitor companies in marketing its products and services ($M = 1.17$, $SD=0.625$). The overall mean ($M=1.74$) and standard deviation ($SD=0.801$) indicate low usage of partnership as presented in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for partnership strategies

TPART	Tourism Partnership (TPART) Strategies Statements	n	M	SD
TPART 1	Our lodge / hotel partners with its customers in the development, delivery and marketing of its products and services.	206	4.30	1.120
TPART 2	Our lodge / hotel partners with airlines, coaches, and other carriers in marketing its products and services.	206	1.31	.821
TPART 3	Our lodge / hotel partners with travel agencies and tour operators in marketing its products and services	206	2.76	1.467
TPART 4	Our lodge / hotel partners with tourism representative organisations such as Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) in marketing its products and services.	206	3.85	1.326
TPART 5	Our lodge / hotel partners with online travel companies in marketing its products and services.	206	2.97	1.501
TPART 6	Our lodge / hotel partners with media companies in marketing its products and services.	206	1.89	1.213
TPART 7	Our lodge / hotel partners with competitor companies in marketing its products and services.	206	1.67	1.025
TPART 8	Our lodge / hotel partners with non-competitor companies such as telecommunications companies in serving its customers.	206	1.40	.795
TPART 9	Our lodge / hotel partners with host community stakeholders in activities that promote environmental protection and sustainability.	206	2.00	1.179



TPART 10	Our lodge / hotel uses partnership as a differentiation strategy to enhance its market reach and image.	206	2.34	1.083
TPART	TPART Averages	206	1.74	0.801

Key marketing mix strategies - Ranking of the marketing mix strategies used by SMTEs

Having established the measures of central tendency and measures of variability, the study ranked the marketing mix strategies used by SMTEs in Masvingo Province. Depicted from the means and the standard deviations, the ranking of the tourism marketing mix strategies shows the following: tourism product is the most used marketing mix strategy by SMTEs and it is followed by tourism packaging, tourism price, tourism physical evidence, tourism promotion, tourism place, and tourism process is on number 7. The three least used marketing mix strategies include tourism people, tourism programming and tourism partnership is on number 10. The ranking is presented in Table 12 below.

Table 12: Ranking of marketing mix strategies of SMTEs

Rank	Tourism Marketing Mix Strategy Elements	n	M	SD
1	Tourism product (TP)	206	4.05	0.668
2	Tourism Packaging (TPACK)	206	4.04	0.822
3	Tourism Price (TPR)	206	4.03	0.659
4	Tourism Physical Evidence (TPHE)	206	3.62	0.855
5	Tourism promotion (TPRO)	206	3.61	0.918
6	Tourism Place (TPL)	206	3.40	1.167
7	Tourism Process (TPRC)	206	2.95	1.009
8	Tourism People (TPEO)	206	2.87	0.972
9	Tourism Programming (TPRM)	206	1.95	0.966
10	Tourism Partnership (TPART)	206	1.74	0.801

In this regard, the researcher confirms that all the ten tourism marketing mix strategies were used, albeit with varying degrees of implementation by SMTEs in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe.

Discussion

SMTEs use all the ten tourism marketing mix strategy elements, though with varying degrees of use and implementation. The top five marketing mix strategies used by SMTEs include tourism product, tourism packaging, tourism price, tourism physical evidence, and tourism promotion. On the other hand, the three least used marketing mix strategies by SMTEs include tourism partnership, tourism programming, and tourism people. This study agrees with Pomeroy et al. (2011) who developed a sustainable tourism marketing mix model using the same ten tourism marketing mix elements used. This finding is partly consistent with Akroush (2011) who found firms to be using the 7Ps marketing model in Jordan. Also, Ishar and Mubarak (2017), Naidoo et al. (2011) found firms to be using the 4Ps marketing strategies of product, price, place, and promotion to enhance performance. The contribution of this study is its focus on ten tourism marketing mix strategies used by SMTEs. The current study explored additional marketing mix strategies in an attempt to address a gap in the literature and practice regarding marketing mix strategies of SMTEs.

Furthermore, the results provide general empirical support for the 10Ps tourism marketing mix model as proposed by Pomeroy et al. (2011), as well as review of extant literature. Thus, this finding further contributes to the development of a 10Ps tourism marketing mix model, as all the ten strategies elements were confirmed valid in this study. The results further provide empirical support for both the 4Ps (McCarthy, 1960) and 7Ps (Booms & Bitner, 1981) marketing mix frameworks as important marketing mix models upon which the three additional tourism-specific marketing mix elements (Morrison, 2009) are based, to make them

ten tourism marketing mix strategy elements (Pomeroy et al., 2011). This study is one of the very few studies to combine all the ten tourism marketing mix elements in one study, hence the results deserve fair consideration.

Conclusion

In conclusion, SMTEs in Zimbabwe's Masvingo Province do utilise all the ten tourism marketing mix strategy elements, albeit in varying degrees of application and implementation. The most commonly used marketing mix strategies are tourism product, tourism packaging, and tourism price. The averagely used are tourism physical evidence, tourism promotion, and tourism place. Lastly, the least used marketing mix strategies include tourism process, tourism people, tourism programming, and tourism partnership. The main conclusion is that all the ten tourism marketing mix elements are important to SMTEs. The study's implication is that by having unequal attention to the ten tourism marketing mix strategies, SMTEs may fail to realise their full potential in terms of business performance. The main recommendation of the study is that SMTEs should give equal attention to all the ten marketing mix strategies elements to drive performance.

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